

Workforce Observations

For The North Central WDA

The Month of October, 2001



October Follows Seasonal Employment Patterns

By the time October rolls around, the summer months are but a fading memory and one can nearly see the end of the fall season, as well. All of the harvest activity of the year is over and the farmer's markets, so busy just a week or two ago, have shrunk to a few growers offering the last of the year's melons and the odd ear of corn. Soon, they will be packing up the long winter ahead, dreaming of seed catalogs and the next growing season.

There are seasonal changes in the job market as well, and certain signs that tell us that the year is turning to a slower time ahead. In some ways, the month of October is the transitional month between the busy activity of the summer period, when job activity is the highest, and the winter months, the slow time in the labor market. It is not unusual to look at employment statistics from anywhere in the state and see declines in job numbers in every industry. This year is no different.

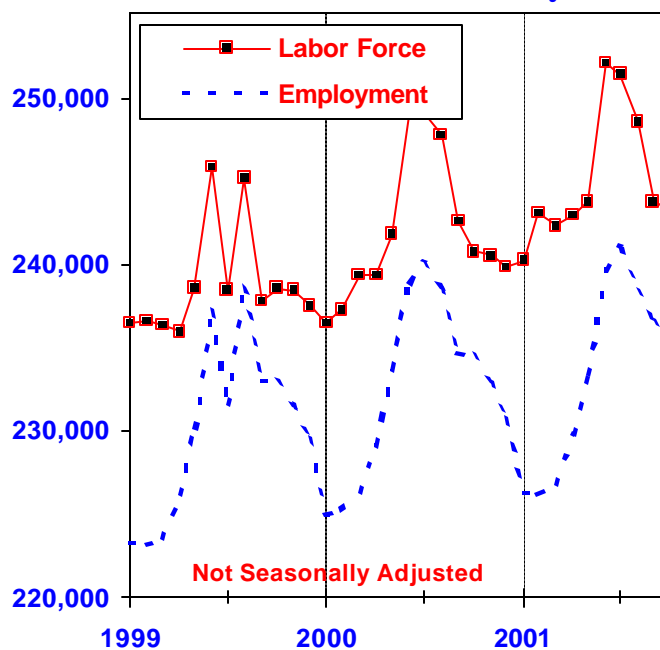
It is no secret right now that there is a general economic slowdown occurring both nationally and regionally. In fact, a general slowdown has been occurring for some time, but it has tended to be fairly gradual, even with the shock of September 11. Judging by employment levels and job patterns in the Wisconsin River Valley, the observer would be hard pressed to see any real clouds on the horizon. Evidence of serious trouble at this time is rather skimpy, although it does exist and bears watching. (Although not part of the October statistics, there were some large cutbacks recently, one involving the closing of a long-running cheese operation in the Wood County town of Arpin, as well as layoffs from a Rhinelander machine tool operation.)

One of the things that raises a flag this month is that we not only see declining employment numbers from September in nearly every major sector (except trade and government), but employment numbers compared to the same period of twelve months ago are also lower. A seasonal downturn at this time of the year is anticipated, but during

healthy economic times it should compare well with previous periods. That does not appear to be the case this October. Manufacturing and service slipped, as did construction. Also, the unemployment rate has gone up slightly in every River county in October compared to last month and last year, although it must be said that the rates everywhere are still at historic lows.

With this in mind, let us take a quick look at unemployment rates from about a decade ago, when different conditions prevailed and different expectations were in place. The unemployment rate for the River district as a whole was about 3.6 percent in the most recent month, which is excellent for late fall (There have been years when this would have been considered a low rate for June or July). The highest county rate was in Langlade county, where it was just over six percent in October. In 1990, the average unemployment rate for the nine county area was almost five percent, with the highest county rate being about seven percent, in Forest County. At that time, even these levels of joblessness were considered appropriate for the fall time of year, and by no means unusual. Historically, seven to over eight percent in late fall-early winter has been acceptable.

**Civilian Labor Force
Wisconsin River Valley**



A Glance at the Counties -

The heavy hand of winter is lightened somewhat, at least in the northern counties of the district, by the mid-season Holiday, which has become longer each year since about the 70's of the last century. A combination of snowmobiling, increased interest in the "silent sports" of skiing and snow shoeing, along with a recreational boom in the north generally, have conspired to create a win-

ter tourist season that has increased in length and importance over the years. It has grown to the point where it is now an indispensable part of the tourist business life of the north, stretching well beyond the traditional Holiday period of late December—Early January.

This past summer was a good one for the northern economy, with both the weather and the general business climate cooperating to bring thousands up every weekend. Hotel and motel occupancy were good nearly every-

where and many new units have gone up in the last few years, notably in the Minocqua-Woodruff area (which may have as much to do with nearby gaming in Lac du Flambeaux as old fashioned tourism)

The approaching mid-winter season, after a fairly good summer, would normally be greeted with anticipation, but this year this may have been replaced instead with apprehension, due to a combination of 9-11 and a serious economic slump. We'll see, but it's hard to be upbeat right now.

For The Month Of October	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Labor Force	8,781	4,728	9,398	14,860	75,933	21,184	37,554	11,422	40,588	224,448
Employed	8,534	4,526	9,003	14,304	73,705	20,400	36,564	11,119	39,116	217,271
Unemployed	247	202	395	556	2,228	784	990	303	1,472	7,177
Unemployment rate(%)	2.8	4.3	4.2	3.7	2.9	3.7	2.6	2.7	3.6	3.2%
Total, all industries**	4,054	3,273	8,117	12,396	70,873	18,501	33,264	8,399	46,237	205,114
Construction & Mining	177	125	472	614	3,626	1,424	1,294	1,078	1,972	10,782
Manufacturing	393	519	1,749	4,185	18,874	2,160	6,255	522	9,934	44,591
Transportation & Util.	182	235	417	486	4,112	712	1,948	262	3,333	11,687
Wholesale Trade	112	43	457	458	5,154	386	1,620	141	1,520	9,891
Retail Trade	894	487	1,868	2,351	12,117	5,070	5,742	2,135	8,671	39,335
FIRE	102	98	261	256	4,868	463	3,651	316	921	10,936
Services	916	506	1,613	1,870	14,075	5,406	7,462	1,901	14,253	48,002
Government	1,278	1,260	1,280	2,176	8,047	2,880	5,292	2,044	5,633	29,890
Change from previous mo.	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	624	131	-353	259	344	497	42	109	-762	891
Employed	648	114	-146	281	293	386	156	109	-935	906
Unemployed	-24	17	-207	-22	51	111	-114	0	173	-15
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.5	0.3	-2.0	-0.3	0.0	0.4	-0.3	0.0	0.5	0.0
Total, all industries**	-50	56	56	51	146	-386	-130	-293	300	-250
Construction & Mining	-15	-12	-12	-11	-24	-13	-30	11	-47	-153
Manufacturing	1	23	23	42	-120	-43	-590	-23	-141	-828
Transportation & Util.	5	19	19	59	83	31	1	-2	23	238
Wholesale Trade	0	-4	-4	37	3	-8	-1	-1	89	111
Retail Trade	3	-10	-10	-28	77	-219	264	-174	397	300
FIRE	2	-2	-2	2	43	-9	-23	1	10	22
Services	-96	-14	-14	-53	-164	-230	0	-154	-124	-849
Government	50	56	56	3	248	105	249	49	93	909
Change from year ago	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	430	-28	-128	43	158	667	146	301	-21	1,568
Employed	388	-43	-86	-76	-424	515	30	282	-382	204
Unemployed	42	15	-42	119	582	152	116	19	361	1,364
Unemployment rate(%)	0.3	0.4	-0.4	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.0
Total, all industries**	43	65	-21	-330	295	228	-120	269	328	757
Construction & Mining	5	26	-42	5	177	83	-11	90	43	376
Manufacturing	-28	-9	-56	-253	-622	46	-165	9	-220	-1,300
Transportation & Util.	7	-2	-2	-17	99	-18	89	18	17	190
Wholesale Trade	13	1	-28	26	90	-18	-22	1	-78	-14
Retail Trade	37	4	31	-43	-252	267	-473	25	2	-401
FIRE	5	4	15	-50	78	-23	60	8	-3	95
Services	-78	24	70	4	386	-223	411	68	427	1,089
Government	82	17	-8	-2	339	114	-10	50	140	723

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

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